

November 12, 2020

Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent, Arlington Public Schools

Monique O’Grady, Chair, Arlington School Board
Barbara Kanninen, Vice Chair, Arlington School Board
Reid Goldstein, Member, Arlington School Board
Tannia Talento, Member, Arlington School Board
Nancy Van Doren, Member, Arlington School Board

Dear Dr. Durán and School Board Members,

I am writing to request that you **assign planning unit 16060 to the Reed School site** for the 2021-2022 school year in accordance with your initial boundary proposal.

We conducted a survey of the Leeway-Overlee Civic Association in response to your recent recommendation to change your initial proposal for the Reed School boundaries. As you are aware, planning unit 16060 is located in the first tier of the Reed school walk zone, with walk times to the school ranging from 5 to 10 minutes with no major roads/crossings. The results of our survey were resounding: every single 16060 respondent indicated that they prefer to be assigned to walk to the Reed school rather than to be bussed to Tuckahoe. These responses are reasonable and logical considering the planning unit’s proximity to Reed School, and that bussing is required to Tuckahoe given its distance¹ and the need to cross a major roadway, namely Lee Highway, and N. Sycamore street. In explaining their reasoning, our neighbors prioritized Proximity and Efficiency.

Given the persistent challenge of transportation costs and logistics, combined with the current budget gap, converting potential Reed school walkers to Tuckahoe bus riders does not make sense, especially when it is proposed that students will be bussed into Reed school, for example from Madison Manor to Reed School. This seems to be an inefficient use of scarce resources. Further, should a pandemic still be exerting its influence in Fall 2021 and thereafter on schools, it would be more logical to let neighborhood kids walk to their neighborhood school sooner than later, especially as they will not have to cross a major roadway. Based on current standards, it will take multiple busses (at a capacity of 11 children per bus) to get the kids to school at Tuckahoe.

¹ Although not explicitly stated with the five expressed priorities, one assumes that SAFETY is presumed to be an unspoken and extremely important priority. It is the author’s understanding that in past and present boundary considerations for Elementary schools, APS considers how safe it is for elementary aged students to cross roadways to get to school and thus the need for the crossing of certain roadways, including, but not limited to Lee Highway and Washington Blvd, strongly suggests that these ES walkers should be bussed.

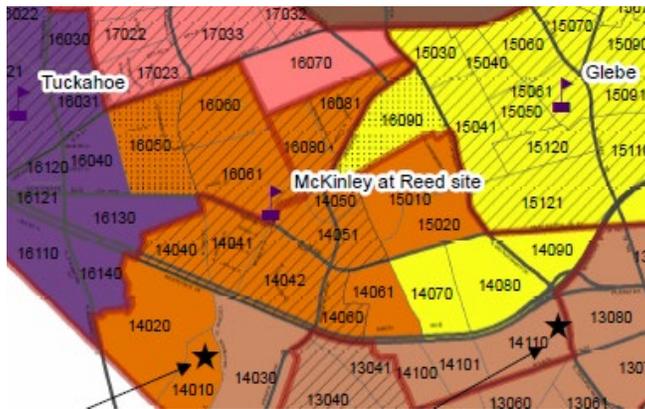
Our survey also received community input from planning unit 16050, where most of the survey respondents indicated, in contrast, that they would prefer to stay at Tuckahoe for the present time. Respondents pointed out that parts of the planning unit are not realistically walkable for small children to get to Reed school and most respondents stated a desire for stability at this time. Several respondents preferred being assigned to Reed, with one noting that the walk to Reed would be safer than this year's expanded walk zone that requires crossing Sycamore Street to get to the Tuckahoe School. A couple of respondents suggested splitting the planning unit, as preferences within the planning unit might likely fall along geographic lines.

While planning unit 16070 was not assigned to Reed in any this fall's proposals, several neighbors continue to regret that they will be the ONLY planning unit south of Lee Highway assigned to Nottingham, splitting it from the rest of its neighborhood that will be at Reed. Furthermore, at least based on the current plans, planning unit 16070 will remain the ONLY Nottingham planning unit that is assigned to attend Swanson middle school.

Dr. Durán, in the current proposal you are recommending sending a single Tuckahoe planning unit--16061, the one in which Reed school is located--to Reed. We ask you not to send the children of planning unit 16061 alone, but instead to let them walk at least with their neighbors and Tuckahoe classmates in planning unit 16060.

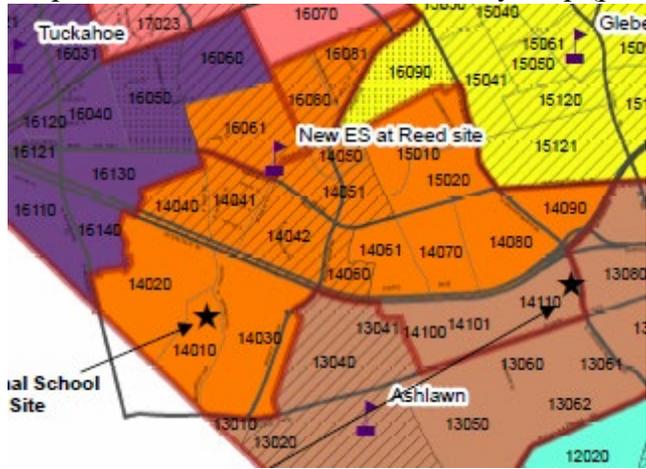
It is interesting to review the proposed school boundaries for Reed School over the past six weeks and how they have changed:

Proposed Reed School Initial Boundary Map (produced 10/5/20)²

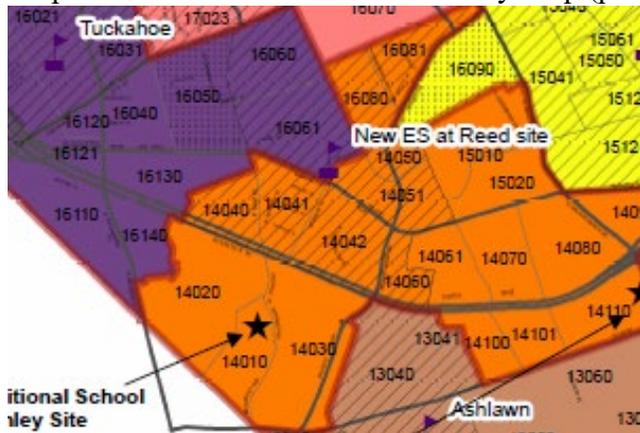


² Noting that planning units 16060 and 16050 are logically included in the Reed School Boundary.

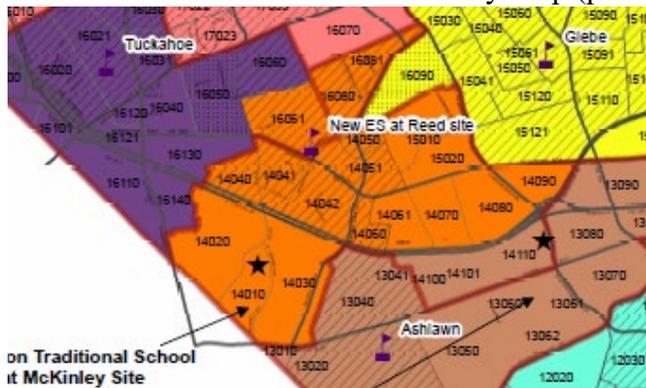
Proposed Reed School Initial Boundary Map (produced 10/29/20) Draft A



Proposed Reed School Initial Boundary Map (produced 10/29/20) Draft B



Recommended Reed School Boundary Map (produced 11/5/20)



It seem as though, at least with respect to proposed Boundaries for Reed School, that those boundaries do not seem to follow the School Board’s previously stated and community reflected

priorities: Alignment, Stability, Demographics, Proximity/Efficiency, and Contiguity.³ Bounded on the north by Lee Highway and on the South by Washington Blvd, streets in which elementary school students will likely need to be bussed across and/or require crossing guards, it is logical, efficient, and economical to have the neighborhood planning units, especially those that are part of the reasonably walkable neighborhood, attend Reed School in Fall 2021.

Your stated policy reasons for moving almost the entire McKinley student body from the current McKinley school site to the new Reed school site is based on Alignment, Stability, Demographics, Proximity/Efficiency, and Contiguity. However, most, if not all of these considerations could also be applicable to the planning units located the closest to Reed School, especially planning units 16061 and 16060. Therefore, at the very least, the easily walkable planning units in the neighborhood should have first priority of being assigned to the neighborhood school.

We appreciate that you are balancing many factors during a difficult time. These are definitely uncertain and unparalleled times for all and stability is a helpful tool for navigating through these times. Since the Reed School walk zone study was completed in 2019, people have been aware of and relied upon APS's prior plan of assigning clearly walkable planning units to the neighborhood school in the Fall of 2021. Neighbors and neighborhoods, who were involved in the planning of and expectation of students who could easily walk to the school, expected and anticipated that these neighborhood students will attend the neighborhood school next Fall.

Therefore, we would appreciate you maintaining and not changing from your previously stated goal of assigning those planning units to a particular school now where they will inevitably be assigned to the school in any future boundary process conducted according to APS's stated policies.

There will always be arguments to keep planning units and school groups together for the sake of consistency and continuity, but this should not necessarily be prioritized over reasonableness and logic. Assigning planning units to an elementary school across a major roadway(s) will decrease the ability to enable those kids to walk or bike to school and will likely require that planning unit to be bussed, adding unnecessary transportation costs and logistics.

³ We would respectfully note a lack of proper consideration and application of the stated APS principles of Alignment, Stability, Demographics, Proximity/Efficiency, and Contiguity that may be apparent when a proposed boundary draft offered an Option B that did not include Planning Unit 16061—the planning unit where Reed School sits—for inclusion in the Reed School boundary.

Let the children of neighborhood planning unit 16060 be part of the founding class of the neighborhood Reed school, rather than be a stray planning unit that will most likely be reassigned to Reed School anyway during the next scheduled boundary process in two years.

Best regards,

Michael Weinstein
President, Leeway-Overlee Civic Association